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Who Are You, Class of 2011

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Who Are You – 2008

I suspect, prior to making your decision to attend this law school, you exhausted all avenues in trying to imagine, who else was making this same decision – who would be in your classes. Rather like your first day in kindergarten, high school and then college. You packed your dreams and aspirations and yes, even your own insecurities into making this monumental decision that will greatly impact your life and professional future. So, who is sitting beside you taking this fateful journey? Knowing you are a curious lot it seems appropriate this morning to tell you, and the faculty, who you, the Class of 2011 really are. The trick is to guess who is who. I challenge you to use the next three years to find out!

You thought you found us by internet searches, word of mouth, pre law advisor's suggestion, visiting us on line or in person, or other means, however I want to remind you that I also travelled 32,678 miles to find, and recruit you to this law school. From across this great country, from California to Massachusetts, big cities and rural towns, you've come to us from 26 states, Korea and 2 of you from Canada. Several of you grew up in very rural Virginia, some on farms and some in big cities. More than half of this class is from out of state – 53% to be exact. Three of you are from California, 4 from Florida, 1 from Illinois, 2 from Indiana, 3 from Massachusetts, 8 from Maryland, 1 has sought refuge from the cold of Maine, 1 from Michigan, 12 from North Carolina, 1 from Nebraska, 3 from New Jersey, 12 from New York, 2 from Ohio, one from Oregon, 6 from Pennsylvania, 1 from Rhode Island, 1

each from South Carolina and Tennessee. Whoa – 5 are Texans, 2 from Utah, 2 from Wisconsin, 1 from Wyoming. Eight of you were born in foreign countries and four of you are citizens of Canada, Korea, Nigeria and South Africa. The Virginia minority in this class welcome you with warm hearts. Sixteen of you are married, some as recently as the last month, and several of you have children. One of you has 3 children. You come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Several of you are the first generation in your family to attend college. You come from privileged backgrounds and from poverty. Many of you are “self made” and have had fierce battles to make it to this momentous day. In a trend we’ve worked hard to sustain, slightly more this year than last year’s class are minorities – 20.4% of your class. The youngest members of this class are twenty years old and the eldest is 52. We are pleased

that many of you are following in the footsteps of family members who are attorneys including one of you whose great grandfather was a double spider. You follow cousins, aunts, fathers, uncles and 2 of you – husbands who are graduates of this law school. We know you will make us as proud as those who blazed a trail for you.

Applications were received this year from 1958 US applicants and from twenty foreign countries. We admitted 30% of those applicants – 61 applicants fewer than the previous year for a class just two bigger than last year's entering class. A greater percentage of those admitted are sitting amongst you representing a higher matriculation rate this year than in the last two years. Graduates of 431 colleges and universities applied to the law school this year and 79 universities are represented in this particular class –

8 more than last year. Twelve of you have advanced degrees – one of you has 3. One of you holds both medicine, surgery and anaesthetic degrees. One of you was educated in Zimbabwe. Entering the law school with your class, though not technically 1L students are students from Paris, Argentina, Italy, Germany, the Ukraine, Sweden and Korea.

Eighty- nine, or 55% of you, have been out of college for at least one year and one of you graduated in 1983. Your median LSAT score of 161 places you in the top 16% of the 414,772 people who took the LSAT over the last three years and the bottom quartile – 159 puts you in the top 22% of those same test takers..

The top quarter of your class achieved an LSAT of 162 – the top 14% of all test takers in the same period. Your median GPA is 3.34 while the top quartile is 3.55.

One of you achieved a GPA of 4.01; 56 of you have a GPA of 3.5 or above. You graduated from 81 different universities; forty-one different majors are represented with the greatest number – 33 graduating with political science majors. English runs a distant second. Four of you were elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Summa, Magna and Cum Laude Honors were achieved by 19 of you. One of you is a doctor. You are a gifted lot in many ways – 54 of you having previously received college scholarships. You represent membership in a variety of prestigious honor societies. Nine – 3 more than last year – have attained the rank of Eagle Scout. Eleven of you are John Marshall

Scholars. Two of you are children of University

Presidents. One of you is a member of the Monacan Tribe.

Think your family had a lot of children? One of you is the last of seven children another is one of six children.

So many of you have traveled extensively, lived, worked, done mission trips, studied and performed as good will ambassadors all over the world! You speak many different languages – French, Arabic, Farsi, Mandarin Chinese, Italian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Ukrainian, French, Korean, Taiwanese, Swedish, Japanese, Hebrew, Gujerati, Czech and Romanian. Several of you are trained, dedicated EMTs and give many, many hours of service.

We are grateful for the service of those of you who have served in our country's armed forces. Among you are a former Marine, a member of the National Guard, an Army

drill sergeant and a naval officer. One of you served in the infantry in Iraq and another has a Secret Security clearance.

Wonder if you can trust your classmates? One of you was entrusted with the safety of a billion dollar war ship.

Another of you, serving in Iraq, was in a vehicle which drove over an explosive device – we're particularly grateful he's with us today.

You've had some pretty amazing careers pre law school.

Twenty-six of you have been paralegals or legal assistants.

Some of you have been teachers – several in other

countries, including China. One of you taught Latin until very recently. You have taught not just in the classroom

but you have tutored immigrants and their children in the

English language both here and abroad. One of you is a

Certified Special Arbitrator with two separate Arbitration

Boards. Wouldn't you like to meet the fellow among you who was the technical artist responsible for devising and implementing the custom facial rigging system used in the film "I am Legend"? Just so you know – he was responsible for developing the mechanics that create the muscle and skin movements of a character's face, such as blinks, lip rolls, and cheek puffs. Or the person who researched the implications the Farm Bill has on childhood obesity? How about the woman in your class who served as an editor for Bloomberg News and the Associated Press as well as having spent two decades as a journalist in the US and Asia? I know the SBA will be anxious to know who was the designer and technical director for "haunted planetarium" and I want to get to know the 1L student who authored a portion of an Alzheimer's Bill which was introduced in the Senate. One of you worked for the Peace

Corps in The Gambia. Another subsidized his education by being a bike repairman for the Notre Dame Police Department. We have several amongst you – not all Asian - believe it or not, who speak Mandarin Chinese - and I'm anxious to talk to the woman who coordinated and managed China grassroots tours with the Chinese ambassador for some travel tips. One of you served as a researcher for an Austrian author working on two major projects and one of you had a Fulbright in Germany. One of you is a certified domestic abuse counselor. A woman in your class has just left a career as a Patent Examiner at the US Patent and Trademark Office. Try to identify your fellow student who did a two year mission in Romania and subsequently worked as a FBI Linguist I know you'll be anxious to identify the sexpert, or sex educator who gives presentations about sexual health. One of your female

classmates is a mechanical engineer and one of you worked in the White House as a member of the Advance Staff for Clinton and Gore; another in the White House as a writer. Politics seem to entice a great many of you with you demonstrating your interest by working on political campaigns and being on the staffs of Congressmen and Senators. Legislative aides, judicial interns, senate interns – lots of you have made your political mark.

Your interests and talents are varied and you are accomplished in so many areas. You are poets, artists, singers, dancers, accomplished in playing a wide variety of musical instruments – several at the professional level. One of you has been in the Fighting Irish Band and another, a male, sings opera. You are published poets and writers and members of orchestras. One of you is a member of a

family band that performs concerts for the elderly and another is the lighting technician for the Kings of Swing.

You join the law school in having a serious commitment to public service. Two of you volunteered for Nicaragua mission trips, another to Romania. Some built houses for the poor in Mexico, one volunteered in Senegal another in Zimbabwe where one of you, together with her husband started a non profit organization whose mission it is to provide educational opportunities for youth in rural Africa and who have raised enough money to pay for 20 children to attend school, One of you is a registered bone marrow donor. Summing up the obvious commitment of this class, one student wrote, “I guess when I look back on my life I want to feel like I made a difference, that my mark on life will be more than a tombstone in a back country graveyard

that kids will make charcoal impressions of for history class.” Your class has already embarked on these aspirations by volunteering countless hours working with the abused, infirm and elderly, in soup kitchens, shelters and with crisis hotlines. You’ve worked long hours in hospices, teaching the disadvantaged; distributing food to the needy, raising funds for charities and extending a helping hand wherever you see a need. You adopt orphans for Christmas, coach children in sports you love and volunteer in hospitals. You commit yourselves not only to those disadvantaged at home but seek to help those less fortunate in foreign countries as well. You believe in the American Dream and seek to take that dream to the world at large. You give so much of yourselves – the world and its future is in good hands.

Excitement sure isn't missing from your lives. One of you, a chemist, jumped from an airplane from 10,000 feet hoping all the while that her parachute would open. Varsity sports are well represented – football, softball, swimming, diving, lacrosse, rowing – we could hold our own Olympics. One of your female classmates started for the Biloxi *Herrricanes* playing full contact football – we need to introduce her to your classmate who was a linebacker at UNCCH. Another of you was paralyzed from the neck down as a result of a soccer game and had to learn to walk again. And, watch out for the boxing fan among you!

There is hardly a sport not represented in your class.

Ultimate Frisbee seems to be unusually popular with this class. You may have been warned about our upper level students' passion for flag football and I've paid attention, while reading files, to who may provide "new blood" in the

constant search for t-shirt power (otherwise known as beating up on the poor undergrads on Sunday morning). I'm honored to have a team named for me but I'd be more honored if they'd actually win a game or two – you know who you are, sitting out there – it's not *all* about your great LSAT score!

Once more this year I've been struck to so often see words such as integrity, commitment, honesty, public interest, ethics, and loyalty permeate your narrative statements. One wrote, "I want passion to be my profession". I've been gratified to see that the reasons so many of you have chosen to go to law school remain the altruistic desire to contribute to making our world a better place to be.....to make a difference...to contribute to mankind. Someone told me that life is a contact sport and so many of you are

survivors of life's more difficult times yet you endure and strive to be better. You don't give up; you are winners.

I could go on and on telling you about yourselves for there are 162 stories amongst you and all of them shed light on your personalities, hopes and dreams. But, half the fun of being in this law school is getting to know those who are destined to become your life-long friends, so I'll stop now and wish you good luck and good fun on the adventure upon which you are now embarking.....I am envious of the smorgasbord of opportunity before you.